



# TRANSFORMING YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE INTO TRUE COOPERATIVE LEADERS: A FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TRAININGS

NASCO Institute 2015  
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# OVERVIEW

- Who I am
- My project & how I got there
- The state of executive trainings
- Looking at what's overlooked
  - Leading like a cooper
  - Relationships
  - Self-care
  - Connecting to the movement

## WHO I AM

- Member at ICC Ann Arbor 4.5 years
- Board Rep, VP of Education, VP of Recruitment
- ICC Ann Arbor Staff: Member Services Coordinator
- NASCO background
  - Led trips to coops in Austin, Lawrence, St. Louis, NYC, & Boston
  - Have facilitated NASCO Institute workshops on institutionalizing SJ education, negotiating Staff contracts, and using community research to further coop's goals

# MY PROJECT & HOW I GOT THERE

- Finalizing an Executive Committee Training Manual for ICC Ann Arbor
- Hoping to have it published and available to other cooperatives by early next year
- How the idea came to be:
  - Personal struggles and growth as a 2-year Executive Member
  - Watching new members struggle and sometimes resign
  - Joined Staff Team took on the creation of a manual
  - Trying to make what I wish someone plopped in my lap 5 years ago

# THE STATE OF EXECUTIVE TRAININGS (I)

- Core content for Executive Trainings can cover two main categories:
  1. Roles & Responsibilities
  2. Leadership, People, & Self

# STATE OF EXEC TRAININGS (II): ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Roles and responsibilities can include:

- Guiding the Board

- Monitoring

- Coordinating & Delegating

- Acting as Stewards

- Departmental Leadership

- Effectively Leading a Committee

- Major Annual Responsibilities

- Evaluations, Planning, Elections, etc.

# STATE OF EXEC TRAININGS (III): LEADERSHIP, PEOPLE, AND SELF

- L, P, & S can include:
  - Leading Like A Cooper
  - Developing and Maintaining Relationships
  - Self-Care
  - Connecting the Cooperative Movement

## STATE OF EXEC TRAININGS (IV): MY ASSUMPTIONS

1. Most coop systems are already training on the first category. \*
2. Many coop systems aren't incorporating the second category into their trainings.





# LOOKING AT WHAT'S OVERLOOKED

TRAINING EXECUTIVE TEAMS IN LEADERSHIP, PEOPLE, AND SELF



# LEADERSHIP, PEOPLE, AND SELF: AN OVERVIEW

- Leading like a cooper
- Relationships
- Self-care
- Connecting with the cooperative movement

# LEADING LIKE A COOPER

1. Acting on Shared Values
2. Being a Model Cooper
3. Supporting Individuals & Groups
4. Championing Stories, History, & Context
5. Being a Cooperative Visionary



# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: ACTING ON SHARED VALUES

- Shared values are: ***your organization's vision, mission, values and the cooperative principles***
- Organization doesn't change because new people in positions



# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: SHARED VALUES - EXAMPLE

## ■ Shared Values:

1. Affordability
2. Education
3. Inclusivity
4. Participation

## ■ What happens if someone is only thinking about one of these?



# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: BEING A MODEL COOPER

- Model Coopers set the tone for what is expected and what is possible
- Examples of it going well:
  - Considering outside perspectives
  - Encouraging others to participate
  - Volunteering for an ad-hoc role
- Examples of it going poorly:
  - Losing temper
  - Non-inclusive language
  - Not following through on tasks
  - Speaking negatively about the governance system



# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS & GROUPS

- Good leaders provide support in many ways:
  - Praise & encouragement
  - Monitoring/Check-ins
  - Helping a member with a proposal/process (even if you disagree)
- ***Being supportive is essential*** – it allows all(more) members have access to the organization and governing



# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: CHAMPIONING STORIES, HISTORY, & CONTEXT

- Motivates members in two ways:

1. Highlighting select stories of progress and success make it feel more attainable
2. Learning history makes members feel a part of something bigger, encouraging them to leave a legacy

- Examples





# LEADING LIKE A COOPER: BEING A COOPERATIVE VISIONARY

- Pushing the organization to realize its goals
- WHY – enables progress
- Can actualize in a few ways:
  1. Championing an obvious solution
  2. Standing up for an unpopular option



# RELATIONSHIPS (I)

- Establish common ground of what a good, healthy relationship looks like
- Your thoughts?



# RELATIONSHIPS (I)

- Establish common ground of what a good, healthy relationship looks like
- Your thoughts?
  - Feel comfortable & safe
  - Can speak honestly & openly
  - Giving and receiving constructive criticism
  - Mutually reliable and accountable (deadlines, attendance, etc)
  - Empathy (listening first)



## RELATIONSHIPS (II)

- Maintaining good relationships promotes morale and teamwork making Executive Committees **feel better and accomplish more**
- Exec. Committee has relationships with many different people and groups
- Framework for thinking about relationships
  1. Context of interactions
  2. Dynamics to be mindful of
  3. Perspectives to take into consideration



# EXAMPLE & APPLIED FRAMEWORK

- Relationship: Executive Committee Member and organization's Board of Directors
- Framework:
  1. Context of interactions
  2. Dynamics to be mindful of
  3. Perspectives to take into consideration



# EXAMPLE (CONTINUED): FRAMEWORK - CONTEXT

- Context of Interactions
  - Board Meetings (1-2x/month)
  - Select number of Board members at committee meetings (weekly?)
  - More formal setting



## EXAMPLE (CONTINUED): FRAMEWORK - DYNAMICS

- Dynamics to be mindful of
  - Exec. Committee tends to be more senior members
  - Exec. Committee has more time in meetings to discuss and digest proposals/materials
  - Exec. Committee creates agendas
  - Exec. Committee has social privilege/respect from the position
  - Board members have to answer to their house – may face more critique/criticism for unpopular decisions



## EXAMPLE (CONTINUED): FRAMEWORK - PERSPECTIVES

- Perspectives to take into consideration
  - Board members have different levels of engagement and commitment to centralized organization
  - A Board member may feel like they don't understand the proposal or voting process
  - A Board member may feel like they don't matter because the executive committee does all the talking





# SMALL GROUPS EXERCISE

- Apply the framework to another Executive Committee relationship
- Context of Interaction
- Dynamics to be mindful of
- Perspectives to take into consideration



# SELF-CARE: WHY?

- There are 3 reasons it is crucial that train on self-care and mitigating burnout
  1. We care about our member-leaders and we want them to be healthy/safe
  2. Most of us are educational organizations. Society doesn't teach folks to take care of themselves; coop can fill in the gaps
  3. When members are taking care of themselves they are more productive and efficient in the work they do for the coop



# SELF-CARE: HOW?

- Figuring out what helps you take a load off
  - Meditation
  - Videogames
  - Baking
  - Long shower
  - Walk around the block
  - 3 more – shout ‘em out!



# SELF-CARE: HOW?

10

**PRACTICAL WAYS  
TO LOOK  
AFTER YOUR  
MENTAL HEALTH**



**TALK  
ABOUT YOUR  
FEELINGS**



**EAT  
WELL**



**KEEP IN  
TOUCH**



**TAKE A  
BREAK**



**ACCEPT WHO  
YOU ARE**



**KEEP  
ACTIVE**



**DRINK  
SENSIBLY**



**ASK FOR  
HELP**



**DO THINGS  
YOU ARE  
GOOD AT**



**CARE FOR  
OTHERS**



# SELF-CARE: SETTING BOUNDARIES & GROUP CATHARSIS

## ■ Two other key things

1. Discuss boundaries early on: Exec. Committee members should discuss with Staff Liaison as well as President (in one-on-ones) what their boundaries are, and make a plan for how to keep on track, and what to do if issues arise (two-way street)
2. Have regular social times: Most of us work too hard. Taking time off as a group can help people relax, and blow off steam. Consider cutting a meeting short to get ice cream, or having a lighter meeting over a meal or drink.



# SELF-CARE: WHEN IT'S "OVERLOOKED" IN EXEC TRAININGS

- Some members take on too much and/or get overwhelmed by the tasks at hand
  - They burn out and suffer personal consequences or burn out and resign
  - Creates burden on individual and cooperative, can lead to resentment on both sides
- Some members take on "too little" and/or don't communicate their boundaries
  - Unfortunately, they can be labeled as lazy/slackers because the coop struggles to acknowledge different people's limits
  - \* Sometimes they aren't doing minimum requirement and that needs to be addressed differently



# CONNECTING TO THE COOP MOVEMENT (I)

- Why is it important that we train our executive committees about how to connect to the movement? (Asking you!)



# CONNECTING TO THE COOP MOVEMENT (I)

- Why is it important that we train our executive committees about how to connect to the movement? (Asking you!)
- Can be motivating to realize that your work is part of something bigger
- Part of a legacy and history (as opposed to a semester class – get a grade, but what you do doesn't "matter")
- Network – support, social – find like-mindedness in cooperative projects, friendship, outside interests
- Working with outside coops emulates the way individual systems work – stronger together
- If we don't talk to each other, we become insular and lose access to new ideas
- Self-perpetuated system – if coops don't help and work with each other, few others will





# CONNECTING TO THE COOP MOVEMENT (I)

- How do we train our executive committee on how to connect?
  - Provide names and contacts (or web addresses) of Local, State, and National coops
  - Discuss cooperative history
  - Organize events with other cooperatives





# Questions & Discussion